

## **New York and New Jersey Education and Research Center Annual Report**

### **SECTION I: ERC summary and relevance, and current contact information**

#### **ERC Summary:**

The New York and New Jersey Education and Research Center, serves Federal Region II, which is comprised of the states of New York and New Jersey, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the U. S. Virgin Islands. The mission of NY/NJ ERC is to educate professionals in occupational medicine, industrial hygiene, ergonomics and occupational safety and health engineering, so that they are able to understand, evaluate, prevent, manage and treat occupational disease and injury in the workers of our region and across the United States. Center Administration is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the ERC, serves as liaison between the programs and NIOSH, and is responsible for interdisciplinary interaction and coordination among the programs and their faculty and students. NY/NJ ERC is a consortium of five educational institutions ([www.nynjerc.org](http://www.nynjerc.org)) offering nine programs in occupational health and safety training, covering three of the four essential core areas for ERC's, namely Occupational Medicine, Industrial Hygiene and Occupational Safety/Ergonomics. Constituent programs are:

- Occupational Medicine and Pilot Project Research Programs at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai (New York City, NY);
- Occupational Medicine at the Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (Piscataway, NJ);
- Industrial Hygiene at Hunter College School of Health Sciences (New York City, NY);
- Occupational Safety and Health Engineering at the New Jersey Institute of Technology (Newark, NJ);
- Occupational Ergonomics and Biomechanics Program at New York University (New York City, NY).
- Continuing Education, Outreach, and Interdisciplinary Programs, at Rutgers School of Public Health (Piscataway, NJ);

#### **Relevance:**

Occupational safety and health is a key component of public health, and the training we provide is primary prevention of accidents and workplace hazards. Our Center focuses on educating our students to make workplaces safer environment in which to work.

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**ERC web link:** [www.nynjerc.org](http://www.nynjerc.org)

## **SECTION II**

### **Program highlights of high impact: Continuing Education and Industrial Hygiene**

The Rutgers School of Public Health and Hunter College developed and offered a three-day *Basic Industrial Hygiene Sampling* course for the field inspectors of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYCDOHMH). NYCDOHMH identified the need for this training based on their Post Hurricane Sandy experience. Program evaluation showed that the training was well received by the students; although, they would have liked more hands-on training, especially in collecting samples. The basic course emphasized calibrating and the mechanics of using the instrumentation.

A three-day *Intermediate Industrial Hygiene Sampling* course was developed and offered for field inspectors to further their sampling skills. During the curriculum development phase of the intermediate course a building collapsed in East Harlem ([http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/13/nyregion/east-harlem-building-collapse.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/13/nyregion/east-harlem-building-collapse.html?_r=0)). Case studies for the intermediate training were based on sampling at this scene, as well as from Hurricane Sandy Recovery. The intermediate course was held at the Hunter College Silberman campus, which is within blocks of the building collapse. The intermediate course was well received by these students; some of them mentioned interest in further training on interpreting data using statistical tool like SPSS. An advanced IH Sampling course may be offered in the future, to these inspectors.

Jack Caravanos, the program director of the IH Program lead the curriculum develop and instruction for both courses. Thirty-five students attended the basic course and 15 attended the intermediate. Harry Zhou and Ken Peskowitz (NYNJ ERC Alumni) served as liaisons from the NYCDOHMH for curriculum development and program delivery. They will deliver these courses to additional agency personnel as needed in the future.

### **Program highlights of high impact: Occupational Medicine**

Research productivity among the Occupational Medicine residents at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai was at an all-time high this past year. Two of the three residents in 2013-14, Drs. Hemant Sarin and Sadie Sanchez, were awarded ERC pilot awards for their studies. Dr. Sarin's study is Pathophysiology of Toxicant-Induced Fibrosis and Solid Malignancy, while Dr. Sanchez has been examining psychological sequelae and PTSD in the World Trade Center surveillance cohort. A total of seven abstracts from three residents were accepted for poster and podium presentations at the 2014 American Occupational Health Conference, the greatest number from any OM residency program. Dr. Sanchez was awarded Honorable Mention (the second place award) for her abstract presentation on Mentholated Cigarettes and Risk of Cancer at the American College of Preventive Medicine meetings in February 2014. As well, Dr. Sanchez presented on cognitive decline in World Trade Center Registry participants at the 2014 International EPICOH meeting in Chicago.

### **Program highlights of high impact: Interdisciplinary**

The NY/NJ ERC conducted its 9<sup>th</sup> Historical Perspectives on Occupational Safety and Health Tour. The locations visited this year included an Apple Orchard near Albany NY, Granite Quarry in Barre, VT, Commercial Fishing in Portland, ME, Paper Mill in Skohegan, ME, and Boot Cotton Mill in Lowell, MA. The Harvard ERC, specially Ann Backus, participated in the Tour by providing their expertise in fishing safety and by organizing the tour of the Portland waterfront. The Northeast Center for Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing Safety and Health (the NIOSH-funded Ag Center in NY) assisted in identifying the farm that we visited in Albany.

The tour provided our trainees the opportunity to see how work impacts health, by visiting work locations that have high injury rates. Comments from the students include:

“It's difficult to think about the present and the future without having knowledge and understanding of the past. Seeing the way these industries are run today in the context of their history helps me to understand how far we have come in terms of health and safety but also how much we can still improve.”

“This tour improved my knowledge of OSH issues outside of my primary discipline, that will most likely make me look at OHS problems more deeper and come with a better solutions.”

“I will a lot more prepared to evaluate the Health and Safety issues in these industries after this trip. I will be able to identify and discuss the issues better than before.”

The tour provides the opportunity for students to understand the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration to address occupational safety and health issues.